

## Message Text

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20

ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8511

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 4184

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: LABOR SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: TURMOIL IN LABOR SCENE CONTINUES FIVE WEEKS AFTER SETTLEMENT OF CELU'S GENERAL STRIKE. ALMOST DAILY NEW CASES ARISE, MOST FROM UNORGANIZED GROUPS. CELU HEADQUARTERS HAS BECOME RALLYING POINT FOR WORKERS WHETHER UNIONIZED OR NOT. CELU LEADERS HAVE URGED MODERATION, ATTENTION TO ORGANIZATION, RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AND PROGRESS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. DESPITE CELU'S RECOMMENDATIONS AGAINST THEM, STRIKES OCCUR, ESPECIALLY IN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND CIVIL SERVICE, GENERALLY WITH HEATED DEMANDS FOR DISMISSAL SENIOR OFFICIALS. EMPEROR AND PRIME MINISTER MADE PUBLIC ADDRESSES APRIL 14 AND 15 RESPECTIVELY CALLING FOR CALM AND RETURN TO WORK AND PROMISING REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES THROUGH ESTABLISHED LEGAL PROCEDURES AND NEW LEGISLATION.

2. CELU HEADQUARTERS HAS BECOME BEACON FOR WORKER GROUPS, WHETHER ORGANIZED AND CELU AFFILIATES OR NOT. DAILY HUNDREDS, OFTEN THOUSANDS, ASSEMBLE THERE, AND ASSEMBLY HALL IS IN CONSTANT USE. CELU HAS URGED MODERATION AND OFFERED ASSISTANCE IN ORGANIZING  
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PROPERLY CONSTITUTED UNIONS WITH ELECTED AND RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP. STRIKING WORKERS HAVE BEEN ADVISED TO RETURN TO WORK PROMPTLY AS BEST TACTIC TOWARD NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF GRIEVANCES. DESPITE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS, SOME GROUPS HAVE PROCEEDED WITH

(TECHNICALLY ILLEGAL) STRIKES IN CURRENT HEATED ATMOSPHERE GENERATED IN MAIN BY CLAMOR FOR DISMISSAL SENIOR OFFICIALS AND BOSSES. OTHER GROUPS WHO HAVE HEEDED CELU ARE SHOWING SIGNS OF RESTIVENESS AS THEY WITNESS STRIKERS WINNING CONCESSIONS.

3. DURING PAST TWN DAYS FOLLOWING CASES MOST PROMINENT IN SITUATION:

(A) 4000 WORKERS OF ADDIS ABABA MUNICIPALITY (INCLUDING GARBAGE COLLECTORS AND STREET CLEANERS) CARRIED THEIR STRIKE THROUGH SECOND WEEK, CULMINATING IN MASSIVE BUT PEACEFUL STREET DEMONSTRATION ON APRIL 11. EMPEROR DISMISSED LORD MAYOR OF CITY AND INSTALLED TEMPORARY REPLACEMENT, WHEREUPON WORKERS RESUMED DUTIES APRIL 12.

(B) APPROXIMATELY 1000 WORKERS OF FRANCO-ETHIOPIAN RAILWAY STRUCK AT DIRE DAWA IN FIGHT OVER INNER UNION RIVALIES. IN CONFUSION ONE GROUP TAMPERED WITH TRACKS, RESULTING IN TRAIN DERAILMENT AND DEATH OF POLICEMAN. SOME 80 TO 100 UNION MEMBERS WERE JAILED, UNCLUDING UNION PRESIDENT TESHOME ABIRE. NOW UGLY STMOSPHERE PREAGES CIVIL DISORDERS OVER DEMAND FOR RELEASE OF PRISONERS. VIRTUALLY DAILY DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUE IN DIRE DAWA.

(C) 1400 ADDIS BUS DRIVERS CONTINUED THEIR STRIKE AND HAVE HELD DEMONSTRATIONS DAILY AT CELU BUILDING AND IN STREETS ON APRIL 13, DEMANDING DISMISSAL FIVE SENIOR OFFICIALS. CELU LEADERS STRIVING HARD RESOLVE THIS DISPUTE AS THESE WORKERS ARE UNION MEMBERS. DRIVERS HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO WORK.

(D) MINISTRY OF FINANCE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING INCOME TAX AND CUSTOMS PERSONNEL, VIRTUALLY TIED UP REVENUE COLLECTIONS RESULTING IN PAINFUL SHORTFALLS. CUSTOMS INSPECTORS AT AIRPORT RETURNED TO WORK AFTER TWO DAYS, BUT BALANCE REMAINED OUT UNTIL ON APRIL 16 GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THREE SENIOR OFFICIALS BEING REMOVED.

(E) SIMILAR GROUPS, MOSTLY UNORGANIZED, HAVE HELD BRIEF STRIKES IN SMALLER INDUSTRIES (SUCH AS AUGUSTA SHIRT FACTORY AND SHOLA DAIRY INDUSTRY) OVER LONG OUTSTANDING DEMANDS FOR CHANGES IN WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS. MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES IN JIMMA, NAZRET, HARAR AND GONDAR AND PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS AS IN ASMARA HOSPITALS AND GONDAR PUBLIC HEALTH COLLEGE HAVE HELD DEMONSTRATIONS OR CONDUCTED SHORT STRIKES, IN SOME CASES UNCLASSIFIED

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WITH BRIEF VIOLENCE.

(F) WORKERS IN PUBLIC CORPORATIONS AND PARASTATAL INDUSTRIES ARE SEEKING TO FORM UNIONS AND TO OBTAIN GOVERNMENT RECOGNITION AND PERMISSION TO AFFILIATE WITH CELUE. LACK OF PROGRESS IS PRODUCING RUMBLINGS OF SEVERE DISCONTENT AS IN ADDIS WATER AND SEWAGE DEPT. AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CORP. WATER WORKERS HAVE LOCKED OUT THEIR GENERAL MANAGER AND SCARED OTHER SENIOR OFFICIALS AWAY. THESE CASES ARE OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO CELUE SINCE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE THESE WORKERS WAS CLEARLY EXPRESSED IN GENERAL STRIKE SETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO ONE CELU OFFICIAL "AT BEST GOVERNMENT IS DRAGGING ITS FEET; AT WORST GOVERNMENT WILL REFUSE, WHICH COULD LEAD TO ANOTHER GENERAL STRIKE".

4. MEANWHILE, GOVERNMENT HAS MADE PROGRESS IN FULFILMENT OF MARCH 10 AGREEMENT WHICH ENDED GENERAL STRIKE. NEW AMENDMENTS TO LABOR LEGISLATION HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT. NEW PRICE CONTROL BOARD WITH POPULAR PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN AGREED UPON AND OFFICIAL PUBLIC NOTICE EXPECTED SOON. PERMISSION GRANTED TO CELU TO PUBLISH ITS "VOICE OF LABOUR" WITHOUT CENSORSHIP, AND FIRST ISSUE APPEARED APRIL 10.

5. IN MOVE TO GIVE LABOR ADMINISTRATION SEPARATE IDENTITY, EMPEROR APPOINTED TEFERRA HAILE SELASSIE (FORMERLY VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR FOR MUNICIPALITIES) AS CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF LABOR RELATIONS. SOME YEARS AGO HE SERVED AS INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICER AND WAS LATER VICE MINISTER IN CHARGE OF COOPERATIVES. HIS APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN RECEIVED WITH MIXED EMOTIONS, ALTHOUGH NONE OPPOSE HIM. IN LABOR CIRCLES HE IS CONSIDERED STRAIGHT-FORWARD, FAIR-MINDED TECHNOCRAT WITH LITTLE FLEXIBILITY IN NEGOTIATION. EMPLOYERS APPLAUD HIS APPOINTMENT AS HE IS KNOWN FOR STICKING CLOSELY TO LAW AND PROCEDURE. HOWEVER, SOME CONCERN EXPRESSED WHETHER HE HAS SUFFICIENT POLITICAL CLOUT TO CARRY NEEDED WEIGHT WITH COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

6. FINALLY, AT EASTER TIME EMPEROR AND PRIME MINISTER EACH MADE DRAMATIC APPEALS FOR CALM IN THE COUNTRY AND RETURN TO WORK. EMPEROR GAVE PROMINENT PLACE IN HIS ADDRESS TO NEED FOR ADJUSTMENTS IN SALARIES AND WAGES AND PROMISED STUDY TO IMPROVE DAILY WAGES OF LABORERS AND MEASURES, INCLUDING MINIMUM WAGES TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES WITHIN POSSIBILITIES OF NATIONAL ECONOMY. HE URGED EVERYONE TO SHUN ALL DISTURBANCES AND PUBLIC COMMOTIONS.  
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7. CELU OFFICIALS HAVE GREETED THESE APPEALS WITH ACCLAIM. ALREADY THEY HAVE FOLLOWED POLICY OF URGING RETURN TO WORK AND AVOIDANCE OF STREET DISTURBANCE. CELU REPRESENTATIVES WERE NOTABLY ABSENT FROM STREET DEMONSTRATIONS BY MUNICIPAL WORKERS AND BUS DRIVERS. STILL, IN CONTRAST TO PEACEFUL, EFFECTIVE EXECUTION OF GENERAL STRIKE WITH ITS CLEAR-CUT CONCLUSION, PRESENT SITUATION IS CONFUSED AND TROUBLESOME FOR CELU. BUS DRIVERS AND RAILWAY WORKERS ARE INTRANSIGENT. CELU IS LABORING UNDER ITS BURDENS TO FULFILL ITS COMMITMENTS, TO ORGANIZE LARGE NUMBERS OF NEW UNIONS, AND TO ANSWER CHARGES AGAINST IT FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, FREQUENTLY LEVELLED ON ACCOUNT ACTIONS TAKEN BY NON-MEMBERS OF CELU. WITHIN CELU AFFILIATES, INNER RIVALRIES ARE CAUSING QUARRELS TO FLARE UP, AND MODERATES ARE HAVING TO CONTEND WITH MORE AGGRESSIVE AND RADICAL ELEMENTS. FIST FIGHTS NOT UNCOMMON.

8. WHILE EMPLOYERS WITHIN FEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS OF ETHIOPIA ARE PURSUING LEGAL PROCEDURES WITH CONTEXT OF LABOR RELATIONS BOARD, EMPLOYERS OUTSIDE FEE DISPLAY INCREASING ANTI-UNION ATTITUDES. ETHIOPIAN TYRE ECONOMY PLANT SAID TO HAVE DISMISSED 38 WORKERS FOR TRYING TO FORM UNION. ALTOGETHER NEARLY 600 WORKERS REPORTEDLY DISMISSED BETWEEN MARCH 11 AND 26, MOSTLY BY SMALLER

ENTERPRISES. EACH CASE WILL REQUIRE SEPARATE ACTION BY LABOR  
COMMISSION AND POSSIBLY BY LABOR RELATIONS BOARD.  
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## Message Attributes

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